

## 4 Steps to Safe Backpack Use



### Step 1: Choose Right.

Choosing the right size backpack is the most important step to safe backpack use.

**Tip:** Bring a friend to help you measure your backpack properly.



### Step 2: Pack Right.

The maximum weight of the loaded backpack should not exceed 15 % of your body weight, so pack only what is needed. **Tip:** If the backpack forces the wearer to move forward to carry, it's overloaded.



### Step 3: Lift Right.

Face the Pack - Bend at the Knees - Use both hands and check the weight of the pack. - Lift with the legs - Apply one shoulder strap and then the other. **Tip:** Don't sling the backpack onto one shoulder.



### Step 4: Wear Right.

Use both shoulder straps - snug, but not too tight. **Tip:** When the backpack has a waist strap - use it.

## References:

**American Academy of Pediatrics**—[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

**Backpack Safety America**—[www.backpacksafe.com](http://www.backpacksafe.com)

**Nemours Foundation**—[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

For more information about backpack safety please visit any of the websites listed above.

The information in this brochure is for educational purposes only. It should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice. Please consult your child's doctor with any concerns you may have.

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## Is your child overloaded?



## Backpack Safety for Back—to—School

**Learn what it takes to use a backpack properly**

**Over 50% of parents report that their children regularly carry more than the 15% of body weight recommendation in their backpacks.**

### **Purchasing a Safe Pack**

Although most backpacks are safe if used correctly, there are a few things to look for when purchasing a new pack.

**A lightweight pack**—A canvas pack tends to be lighter than say leather and helps reduce the load placed on your child's frame.

**Wide padded shoulder straps**—these cushion your child's shoulders and distributes weight more evenly.

**A padded back**—protects your child from sharp objects (pens, pencils, rulers) in the pack and increases comfort.

**A waist belt**—reduces excess movement and helps to keep weight evenly distributed.

**Multiple compartments**—allow weight to be more evenly distributed.

### **Proper fit**

*Make sure:*

**The pack isn't too wide.** A pack should be no wider than your child's torso.

**The pack isn't too long.** A back pack should be slightly above the child's waist (about 2 or three fingers).

**The straps are snug but not too tight.** Snug straps minimize movement and help distribute weight evenly.

### ***Is Your Child Overloaded?***

Listed below are some telltale signs that the backpack your child is carrying is too heavy.

**Your child leans forward**— if your child has to lean forward to balance his/herself the pack is too heavy.

**Your child struggles to put on or take off the backpack.** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a child carries no more than 15% of his/her body weight (a child who weighs 100 lbs should carry no more than 15 lbs. in a backpack).

**Your child complains of back, shoulder, or neck pain.** First make sure your child is wearing the pack correctly. Check the straps and make sure your child wears the pack on both shoulders. Reduce the load to no more than 15% of your child's body weight.



### ***Ways to Lighten The Load***

**Encourage your child to use his/her desk and locker frequently** to drop off unnecessary books.

**Eliminate unnecessary items** like CD players, laptops, toys, and video games.

**Encourage your child to bring home only those books that are needed.** If there is a particularly heavy load have your child keep the heaviest books under an arm.

**Have your child clean out the backpack once a week.** This can help eliminate unnecessary items and may alert you to hidden problems at school.

### **Packing a Backpack**

Teaching your child how to properly pack their backpack can reduce back problems.

1. Put the heaviest items closest to the back.
2. Use outside pockets for small or odd shaped items.
3. Make sure your child can tell what an overloaded pack feels like.
4. Encourage your child to tell you if he/she is experiencing any pain or discomfort when wearing his/her backpack.